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AIRCRAFT OWNERS AND PILOTS ASSOCIATION

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DEPT. OF TRANSPORTATION
DOCKETS

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Docket Management System
Department of Transportation
Room Plaza 401
400 Seventh Street, SW.
Washington, DC 20590-0001

FAA-2003-15410-4

RE: FAA Docket No. FAA-2003-15410; Airspace Docket No. 03-AAL-1

To Whom It May Concern:

The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA), representing over 400,000 general aviation pilots, opposes the establishment of restricted area 2204 (R-2204) near Point Oliktok, Alaska as proposed in FAA Docket No. FAA-2003-15410; Airspace Docket No. 03-AAL-1. As an alternative, AOPA recommends the establishment of an Alert Area as a more suitable option for the Department of Energy's (DOE) Mixed-Phase Arctic Clouds Experiment.

Because the aerial activity will only occur during instrument meteorological conditions, an Alert Area provides an appropriate level of safety for general aviation aircraft. Also, the limited utilization of the airspace, a maximum of 30 days annually beginning October 2004 through 2009, does not justify charting permanent restricted airspace.

AOPA understands the safety concerns related to an unlit balloon and 6,700ft mooring cable and an Alert Area provides the needed safety and alerting capability.

Based on the above comments, AOPA recommends that an Alert Area be established and notations added to the chart indicating the type of aerial activity occurring in the Alert Area. AOPA also encourages the FAA to work with industry to educate Alaskan pilots upon implementation of the Alert Area.

Sincerely,

Heidi J. Williams
Manager
Air Traffic, Regulatory & Certification Policy

Cc: Reginald Matthews, ATA-400